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ABSTRACT

An approach to reversing pervasive pronunciation errors in students of English as a second language has been developed that uses a variety of techniques and strategies based on the assumptions that: (1) changing habits is a gradual process; (2) progress occurs when students are aware of their problems and the solutions; (3) most learning must occur outside class; (4) individualized instruction is needed; (5) pronunciation is a skill that improves with systematic exercise; and (6) for advanced fossilized speakers, consonant clusters at word junctures require complex movements of the speech organs and muscles. Music pedagogy has provided assistance through its approaches to practice in general, scale practice in particular, and the concept of movement from one musical position to another. The approach adapted from these techniques concentrates on remediating pronunciation errors occurring in the flow of speech due to inherent difficulty of the sounds themselves and from the movement from one sound to another, particularly consonant clusters not treated in most texts. The techniques involve pretesting, analysis, recordkeeping, exercises for identified problem areas, and in-class activities to form new speech habits, including teacher encouragement, taping of student speech and progress, and grading based on both effort and success. The strategies used include motivation, time management, and teacher assistance. The approach is found to require teacher commitment and work, but also to produce immediate results. (MSE)

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IMPROVING FOSSILIZED PRONUNCIATION: APPROACH, TECHNIQUES, AND STRATEGIES

by

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Presented at the Nineteenth

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IMPROVING FOSSILIZED PRONUNCIATION: APPROACH, TECHNIQUES, AND STRATEGIES

Few problems in language teaching are more enigmatic or frustrating to the ESOL teacher than that of improving the pronunciation of fossilized speakers--those students who have developed inaccurate speech habits over a long period of time which are resistant to change. The ESOL teacher, whether in the elementary or secondary school, adult education, or higher education classes, is faced with considerable barriers which make the task difficult at best.

The difficulties of the classroom teacher are threefold. First, few ESOL teachers have the necessary training to deal with the complexity of the fossilized speakers' problems. A review of methods texts and pronunciation textbooks reveals that the emphasis in the profession is on techniques for teaching beginning to intermediate students and not the more advanced. In an excellent article on fossilized pronunciation, Acton (1984:72) acknowledged, "...there appears to be nothing currently available in print that specifically addresses the problem."

Even if a teacher were to have the appropriate training for dealing with the problems of fossilized speakers, a second barrier which must be overcome is that of finding the time in the average classroom to work on these problems. Somewhat surprisingly, pronunciation, although considered important, is seldom allotted enough time to make any significant difference in advanced students' speech. The average teacher may be given

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the task of teaching all skills in a few hours a week, certainly not enough time to work with individual students on their particular speech problems. Even in an intensive course, with five or more hours a week spent on listening/speaking skills, pronunciation practice can often be considered secondary priority after conversation, dictation, and listening/notetaking practice. The task is further complicated by the fact that advanced speakers will frequently have unique or idiosyncratic habits which must be given individualized attention. Any approach which has the aim of defossilizing a student's pronunciation must be able to utilize time and resources to provide this kind of attention to each student.

Less often noticed, a third hurdle to defossilization is the motivation of the students to do what they have to in order to change habits of pronunciation which have been used for long periods of time. Perhaps the most crucial motivational block is the students' conviction that there really is not much they can do about their pronunciation. For the most part, they have spent years studying or acquiring English, have spent endless hours repeating sounds and being corrected, and have seen very little change in their speech. In short, they are resigned to living with sometimes incomprehensible speech.

This paper is written with the purpose of presenting an approach to defossilization with techniques and strategies for, if not eliminating these formidable barriers, at least beginning a process of reducing pervasive errors. In searching for the

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means, the profession must look beyond its own pedagogy to others which may provide insights to help attain our goals. This approach borrows liberally from stringed instrument teaching pedagogy to arrive at a way to work with students on fossilized speech. It does not purport to be the best or only way to help upper-intermediate and advanced students. It is an attempt to devise a workable approach which any classroom teacher or private tutor in the real world of ESOL teaching can use. This approach builds on the foundation provided by Coates and Regdon (1974) and Acton (1984), but varies from them in one significant way: it is designed specifically for the actual classroom where pronunciation is not the primary focus of the course (a situation which is often the rule rather than the exception).

The approach, techiques, and strategies presented in this paper have evolved over a number of years while working with intermediate to advanced students in both classroom and tutorial settings and have been determined by the following criteria:

1. They can provide for individualized attention.
2. They do not make extreme demands on teachers' time or class time.
3. They are simple in concept and in implementation.
4. They get results.

Approach

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This approach is based on the following major assumptions:

1. Changing habits is a gradual process which takes time.
2. Learning new habits will proceed more rapidly if students are aware of their problems and of what they can do to solve these problems (Gattegno,1976).
3. Most learning must occur outside of class (Acton,1984)
4. The fossilized speaker needs individualized instruction/direction.
5. Pronunciation is a skill, much like playing musical instrument. It can be improved by systematic exercise.
6. For advanced fossilized speakers, consonant clusters which occur at word junctures require complex movement of the speech organs/muscles (Cook,1984)

One of the strengths of the TESOL profession is our willingness to look to other disciplines for methods and techniques to help us teach better. In the realm of pronunciation, we have used speech therapy, drama instruction, psychology, speech coaching, and jazz chants--all of which have given us insights into the process of helping students improve their speech. A discipline which also offers help is the musical instrument pedagogy--especially that of stringed instruments.

For those who have ever studied or taught a musical instrument, the similarity of musical instrument pedagogy to pronunciation

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teaching can be striking. Putting aside artistic considerations, playing a musical instrument is a skill just as making sounds with our speech instruments is. In addition, every music teacher has known the frustration of having to instruct a student who has been studying and practicing for years and who has developed egregious technical problems, either due to lack of competent instruction or simply poor study habits. The same might be said for fossilized speakers. Many music students and language students are unaware of their technical shortcomings, cannot hear them, and must be given specific guidance and exercises to begin the long process of undoing, reshaping, and solidifying new, correct habits.

Continuing the analogy, in order to help a student, the stringed instrument teacher would listen to a new student play and decide what technical difficulties needed the most immediate attention. What intefered with the quality of sound production would be addressed first. In the case of a classical guitarist, hand position might be the first problem, followed by finger placement on the keyboard, sound production, and finally, smooth movement from one sound to another (i.e., movement of the left hand from one position on the neck to another. The approach used to enable students to move from position to position on a stringed instrument while maintaining the rhythm and melody is particularly applicable to the ultimate goal we as teachers have with advanced students.

The fossilized speaker comes to the teacher and produces

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utterances. The teacher listens; decides what the most immediate problems of production are; works on position of the mouth, tongue, and teeth; and then begins to help students move from one sound to another to create a smooth flow of clear and distinct sounds.

How the music teacher achieves results can be of interest and use to the teacher of pronunciation. First, the music teacher analyzes the student's playing, decides what must be improved, and, then, decides what the student is capable of improving now. The teacher then points out the problem to the student, gives the student scales and short pieces to practice, and expects the student to spend time at home mastering individual technical difficulties. Each week, the teacher sees how far the student has progressed and decides whether the student can go on to another problem area or not. The idea is that through careful, frequent practice, the new techniques will transfer to playing over a period of time.

Additional techniques which most music teachers insist on are having the student slow down at difficult parts in a piece or exercise (using a metronome) and separately practicing two very difficult sections which occur one after the other. Teachers know that students tend to cheat a little at the end of one difficult movement in order to be able to play the next difficult movement, which results in indistinct, disjointed music.

What, then, can teachers of pronunciation borrow from the

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musical instrument pedagogy? First, we can use the approach to practice to our advantage. Because we do not have enough time to individualize instruction, a necessity with fossilized speakers, we can give the student exercises to practice at home. Second, the use of scale practice for music students can be adapted to pronunciation instruction. Although many former music students may grimace at the thought of boring repetitive scale practice, the serious, advanced musician knows their immense value. Third, and perhaps the most productive area of transfer between the two disciplines, is the importance of hand movement from one position to another on the guitar, piano, violin. It is at this level of instruction that many would-be musicians falter, become frustrated, and eventually move on to other pursuits. In order to change hand position on the neck of the guitar, for example, the left hand must release its grip, move quickly and smoothly up or down the neck, stop at the desired note, and, frequently, repeat the sequence to move to another position for another note.

The analogy of movement from position to position is particularly relevant when we view the problems which confront students who have fossilized speech difficulties. They may be very adept at pronouncing individual vowels, consonants, and some of the more common consonant clusters, but when they must converse and try to make themselves understood, they are faced with the problem of movement from one sound to the other. They, like the guitarist, must move from one position to another, smoothly

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and accurately, without losing continuity or rhythm. What many students do when they encounter difficult sounds is revert to similar sounds in their native language or devise shortcuts. What makes the difficult sounds even more problematic is their proximity to other difficult sounds. If a student has problems with the /sh/ and the /ð/ sounds, these difficulties are compounded when the two sounds follow or precede one another in the flow of speech. There is just too much gymnastic movement of the articulators (the tongue, teeth and lips) for the student.

The approach presented in this paper concentrates on the errors in pronunciation which occur in the flow of speech due to the inherent difficulties of the sounds themselves and the additional problem of movement from one sound to another. Patrie (1984) maintains that mispronunciation of consonants can interfere with comprehensibility more than mispronunciation of vowels. The experience of taping and analyzing students' speech for many years seems to lend support to Patrie's claim. I maintain that it is not simply the fact that consonants have a more deleterious effect on communication which should concern teachers, but also the reasons why consonants are being mispronounced. It is here that word juncture and the muscular movement between difficult sounds become significant.

An example of some common student errors may make the case clearer. If one were to analyze the speech of a Korean speaker, he/she would find some stereotypical pronunciation errors. The /f/ and /v/, when preceded or followed by bilabials /b/, /p/,

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and/m/,are often completely assimilated by the bilabials. "If Paul will save money" becomes "Ip Paul will sabe money". Also the /ʧ / will often be pronounced as a /d/ when it precedes or follows palatals or sounds which require considerable movement or repositioning of the tongue, teeth, or lips. It is not that Korean students cannot pronounce these sounds individually, but that in rapid speech, when these sounds come together, the movement from one to another causes students to cheat a little. In essence, their technique deteriorates--they are asked to do too much.

Rather than treat the problems of advanced, fossilized speakers as ones of individual sound production (although some students may need remedial work on some sounds), this approach goes beyond pronunciation texts. The focus is on the unusual consonant clusters which are never found in pronunciation texts, such as /vb/ (in "have breakfast", /s ʧ /(in "we miss them", and /n ð / (in "in the dorm") which occur in word junctures and repeated or alternating difficult sounds in close proximity to one another, such as in "They really rely on Larry" or "Buy five flowers before Paul phones." The contention here is that fossilized students have not developed the technique to move smoothly and rapidly from one difficult sound to another, and they have been given very little guidance or practice in movement (i.e., what they must do between sounds, how they should prepare for the second sound in a difficult cluster). Instead, they have been drilled in individual sound production and a

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few common initial or final clusters.

For fossilized speakers, teachers must develop student awareness of their errors, give them instruction on how to correct these errors, and provide them with exercises to undo old habits and develop new ones. It is with this purpose that the following techniques have been put together in a way that they can be applied in the classroom setting.

Technique

Because time is of great importance in the classroom, how well an approach can be applied to the classroom will determine whether it gets results or whether it is even used at all. In order to provide individualized attention to each student, the teacher has to make use of out-of-class time to free in-class time for activities which require direct supervision. For this approach to work, then, a very systematic structure must be adhered to, without which students may lose their sense of purpose and direction.

Techniques offered here are concerned with testing, analysis, exercises, practice procedures, recordkeeping, in-class work, and grading. This section deals with how the approach is actually used in a course, detailing what the teacher does and offering suggestions as to how he/she might accomplish it.

Pretesting. Within the first few days of class, the teacher obtains a sample of the students pronunciation for analysis.

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Taping the students provides a sample the teacher can evaluate after class as well as a pretest to compare with end-of-course tapes. I have students read a paragraph from a book, one which has a variety of sound combinations. Not just any paragraph will provide the complex combinations which are problematic to students. I select a passage which uses present and past tenses, plurals, and many words with 'th' sounds. After students read aloud, I ask them something about their families or about their education. Each student tapes about five minutes.

Analysis. Before the next class, the teacher listens to each student's speech, seeking pronunciation problems of different types. First, there are those which interfere with intelligibility. Second, there are errors which affect how the student is perceived by others, intellectually and socially. For example, a student who leaves off the final /s/ in plurals, third person singular verbs, or possessives may appear to be less intellectually alert to teachers or coworkers. The dropped 's' in writing can also have a deleterious effect on the student's writing grades. Here intelligibility is not a central concern, but the secondary factors are. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the teacher should identify a pronunciation problem which the student can overcome in a relatively short period of time.

From the first analysis, the teacher should identify two or three problems to work on. More than this may overwhelm the student, and there will be adequate opportunity to find other problem areas during the term.

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Recordkeeping. Before analyzing the pretest, the teacher sets up a folder for each student. I generally use a piece of scratch paper, which I keep handy, to take notes as I listen to students on the tape obtained in the first class. I simply write down any sounds that I hear mispronounced, making no judgements as to which ones are important or not. Notes may look something like these:

on^the — underline = mispronunciation
d — letter under the line = incorrect sound
^ = possible juncture problem

give^people
b

tax
\ — diagonal line = indistinct/not clear

with^some
s

psychology — accent over syllable = stress error
p

She makes the bed
\ d

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If there are words which the student mispronounces that seem to be essential to his/her field of study or profession, these are added to the notes. A vivid example of specific word pronunciation was the student who was majoring in finance but who everyone thought was majoring in fine arts.

Some errors show up repeatedly in the student's speech; however, the teacher has to weigh the repetition with the severity and with the potential for improving or eliminating an error. There are no hard and fast rules for choosing initial problems to work on. After only a short time of working with analysis in this approach, however, the teacher will develop a sense of what can be accomplished. In addition, the teacher's task will be simplified because many students will have the same difficulties. For instance, the /th/ voiced and unvoiced sounds are problematic for students from many language backgrounds. The final /s/ and /d/ (past participle and past tense ending) are also common errors. For oriental students, the sterotypical /l/, /r/ confusion is everpresent. Each teacher will inevitably gravitate towards those difficulties which he/she has had the most success in correcting.

Experience acquired during the years of applying this approach has shown the /l/,/r/ problem to be best left for the latter stages of the course. Also, as mentioned in the approach section, students seem to have great difficulty making noticeable progress

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in vowel difficulties. Since students often have very low levels of confidence, the primary concern at the beginning stage is to find something which they are able to progress in (some vowel distinctions, such as the /e/,/ae/ are not easy to hear and pronounce) and cannot be easily mastered.

There is no attempt to imply that vowels and extremely difficult production problems should not be addressed; however, given the time and resource restrictions of the average classroom teacher, such problems may best be left for a more advanced class or for later stages of the course.

Exercises. Once the teacher has identified the problem areas, the next step is to select one problem and create one very short sentence with the problem in it. The sentence is numbered and written on the inside flap of the folder. This will provide easy reference in class or when listening to individual tapes.

Looking at the notes on the hypothetical student above, the teacher will notice that the student says /d/ for /ð/. Occasionally, students need remedial work on individual sourds. Generally, however, most advanced students have had considerable practice pronouncing the /ð/ sound in isolation and can do this on command. It is when they must pronounce the sound just after or before palatals /n/, /t/, /d/; bilabials /m/, /p/, /b/; and labio dentals /f/,/v/ that the muscular control is just too demanding. So, most students settle for the /d/ substitute sound, and many teachers and native speakers accept it. Even

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though this sound is not always crucial to the process of communication, it can very frequently obscure meaning, especially if other sounds in the sentence are not clearly pronounced.

For the first sentence of this student, then, the teacher would give one sentence with the / ð / sound in two or perhaps three places. For example:

The students did their homework on the weekend.

Although the analysis of the student's speech revealed that he was having difficulty with final clusters with final /s/ (makes). I would point out the 's' on 'students' for practice in the initial session and follow up with a second sentence the next week:

She puts^flowers in some pots three times a week.

In-class techniques. The first class day after the pretest the teacher gives each student his/her sentence to practice at home. The best way to give the first sentence is to write it down on a piece of paper to give to the student at the end of the class. In this class the teacher works with as many students as possible in order to show them how they are to work on their sentences. A student will be called up to tape into a casette recorder (it helps to pick a student who does not appear too shy). The teacher writes that student's sentence

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on the board and asks the student to give his name and date and read the sentence aloud. After the student reads aloud, the teacher asks the class if they heard any mispronunciations. This is a good opportunity to begin get the class to analyze the sentences through listening to others. The teacher then underlines the /ð/ sounds in the sentences and explains that this is the one problem that the student will work on for the next week.

It is during the beginning days that the teacher must help the students learn how to form new speech habits. Following techniques from the music pedagogy, the teacher tells the students that 1.) they must slow down when they come to the difficult areas and 2.) they must separate problem words. If the previous sound is interfering with the /ð/ production, then the student must gain control over the two sounds and also the muscular activity necessary to move from one to the other. Once the first student has demonstrated that he or she understands the proper way to practice the sentence, the teacher then moves on to another student with a different problem. As simple as this practice approach sounds, it can take students several lessons to fully comprehend and use it.

Before letting the students leave class, the teacher makes sure to tell them that they should practice their sentence on tape five days a week. For the first few weeks , no more than 10 minutes per day should be spent practicing. More than ten minutes will often bore the student without providing tangible

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results. Some highly motivated students will inevitably do more; however, those students who do not yet believe in the approach will not feel as if they are being overburdened by the ten minutes a day. As they practice and as the teacher has a chance to elaborate on the approach during the first few weeks, most students begin to believe in the effectiveness of the approach and work harder. As more sentences are added to the practice sessions over the term, the practice times will increase.

In order to save save the teacher time in listening to tapes, two very important procedures must be made clear to the students from the start. The first is to have students only tape each sentence three times per day. They should tape the sentence when they begin, turn off the recorder and practice. then after about five minutes, record the sentence again and turn off the recorder. After five more minutes of practice, they should then tape the sentence for a third time. Were the students to tape their whole sessions, the teacher's task would be made too demanding. A second procedure is to have students always start a new tape from the beginning each week. Even though this means that they will be erasing previous weeks' material, the loss is offset by making the teacher's job of finding the beginning of the tape easier.

The teacher clearly states the importance of homework and the percentage of the grade pronunciation will count for. Initially at least, many students need the grade stimulus in order to

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get them to the point where they begin to see progress; then, a more intrinsic motivation takes hold. The teacher also assigns a day to hand in the tapes. In a class of 12, the teacher can assign half of the class to turn in their tapes on Mondays and the other half on Fridays. If the class is larger, then it can be divided into three groups, each turning his/her tapes in at different times. Although the teacher does not spend more than 15 minutes per tape, it is important that groups be spaced far enough apart to allow the teacher time to review a few tapes a day. This will help the teacher avoid fatigue and ensure that the tapes are returned in a timely manner. Once this routine is established, it usually carries a certain momentum through the end of the semester. If it is not carefully organized and if the teacher is not exigent at the beginning, the class may very well develop an inertia that is difficult to overcome.

For the next two weeks the teacher creates one sentence per student per week, giving them either in writing or orally on the tape. As the students practice, other problems show up which can then be used for future sentences. After the third week, the teacher can begin to combine two of the previous problems in one sentence. Initially, creating sentences may pose difficulties for the teacher, but with practice and without being too much concerned with meaning, this skill will be quickly developed. If students understand that they are practicing movement from one sound to another, they will not be terribly concerned about

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meaning. As long as the sentences do make logical sense and are syntactically correct, they are adequate. Too much insistence on realistic sentences that the students would actually use in speech, along with specific consonant combinations, would make the task of creating sentences a very difficult one. The primary objective is to find words which combine problem sounds in a short sentence.

As the term progresses, new sentences are given as the student demonstrates control of the previous sentences. Later sentences become longer and much more complicated, requiring the student to develop the ability to maintain control of problematic sounds in the flow of speech and just after or before other problematic sounds--in effect, approximating what people do when they speak any language fluently. Those who work hard can make significant progress. In a 15 week term, few students get more than ten sentences, but these can contain several very complex combinations of problem sounds.

Taping procedures. Each student has two tapes and is recording at home on one while the teacher has the other. The teacher analyzes each tape for progress and new problem areas, putting notes from analysis of each tape on scratch paper and transferring important information about problems and new sentences to the folder. I force myself not to spend more than 15 minutes on any tape, even though there is often up to an hour of material on a tape. I listen to the first day and the last day to see what progress has been made. This gives me an idea of the student's

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progress and also provides me with something to say as encouragement to students. As the semester progresses, less time needs to be spent on the tapes (sometimes only five minutes) because students have caught on to procedures and need little supervision.

At the end of each tape, the teacher should try to begin with a positive comment on progress. If the student has not worked well, the teacher should urge him/her to give the approach a good try. After a positive remark, areas for improvement can then be suggested, concentrating on the two or three major problems in the sentences. I always try to end up with an encouraging remark or a re-emphasis of the progress I have seen and then give a new sentence if the student is ready. A very important procedural habit is to always rewind the tape to the beginning of the teacher's comments. Students should not have to search for comments. This example also helps when the teacher asks students to rewind tapes to make the process of listening more efficient and less frustrating.

Additional exercises for the tape include reading aloud from a book or a magazine and practicing speeches which will be given later in the term. Besides breaking the boredom of repeating sentences, these exercises help identify new problems.

Grading. Students can be graded in a number of ways. I place considerable emphasis on practice and on accomplishment. For example, student practice can be graded on the number of tapes turned in as well as on the quality of practice. The number of sentences a student ends up with can also be used

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for grading since new sentences are given only when the student has shown sufficient improvement on the previous sentences. Some students tape very little; others tape very little, but it is of high quality. Still other students tape for long periods of time, repeating errors and generally ignoring the purpose or techniques for efficient practice. Students who master the sentences employing the study techniques receive greater credit than those who practice, but do not use the techniques. The importance of the tapes to the grade should be clearly and firmly stated. The teacher can give a grade for the homework on the tape.

For a midterm, each student is asked to read a paragraph (perhaps the same one read in the first class), recite sentences from memory (with some help from the teacher), and answer a few questions spontaneously. The same is done for the final examination, with more sentences and perhaps a longer paragraph. The <u>pronunciation</u> grade will be based on:

1. Practice - number of tapes, quality of practice, and number of sentences. 30%
2. Midterm - 15%
3. Final - 30%
4. Overall improvement - includes the student's ability to hear and self-correct (or to avoid) errors worked on in sentences while presenting speeches and prepared talks as well as in conversation. 25%

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Although the above percentages can vary, they give an idea of the relative importance of practice, examination, and performance. Because of the short period of time that students have to correct problems which they may have had for years, actual performance is not weighed as heavily as might be expected. Progress must always take into considerationn where a student began and how effectively he/she practiced.

Strategies

In addition to the philosophy underlying the approach and the techniques teachers would use in class, a viable approach to defossilizing pronunciation entails many strategies for motivating students to keep them working through the frustration which normally develops when people try to change habits. In addition, teachers must have their own strategies for saving time and energy. And finally, there are many strategies for teaching students how to master difficult sound combinations, for showing them how to do what native speakers do to achieve fluid speech. When teachers combine these strategies and students make progress, the excitement of seeing student progress will provide both students and teachers motivation to continue using the approach.

Student Motivation. The most crucial phase of this approach is within the first two to three weeks of the course. It is here that teachers must explain the approach, convince students that it works, and ensure that they apply themselves.

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Initially, students will have some difficulty understanding exactly what it is that they have to do, and, because changing old established habits is always difficult, they can become frustrated and discouraged. The teacher, then, must provide the initial enthusisam and belief in the approach, as well as emphasize the importance of pronunciation improvement to the overall grade. There is little room for half-hearted efforts to get students to work hard at this approach, and the teacher must be prepared to stick with it until the students begin to make progress. If the students sense that the teacher is just going to give this new idea a try, there is little hope for success.

Teacher belief in the approach can best be transmitted by a clear presentation of the basic (and only the basic) philosophy, combined with well-organized preparation (folders, recordkeeping) and emphasis in the first several days of class. Within the first two days of class, each student should be taped, and within the first week, students should have received their practice sentences and been given instructions and in-class practice for taping at home. How students will be graded must be made clear in the first week as well. It is also imperative that the teacher return tapes on time.

Another essential ingredient to student progress is encouragement. I always try to indicate what the student has done well on every tape, right at the beginning. I also make sure to finish up with a word or two about the overall progress the

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student has made. Of course, if a student is not working very hard, I also point this out in as non-judgemental a way as possible. Because the approach requires students to make progress on very subtle distinctions, it is easy for students to feel that they are not making progress, and it is the teacher's job to help them see that they are, indeed, making progress.

Curiously, students are not the only ones who have difficulty measuring progress and keeping it in perspective. When we teach beginning students, they make such great gains in short periods of time that we often find ourselves expecting advanced students to do the same. Realistic expectations, then, are an important part of the motivation process. If I were to be able to help a student pronounce /ʧ/ correctly most of the time and pronounce the final /s/ and final stops, I would consider the semester a virtual success.

Time management. After the inital classes where time is spent showing students how to practice (i.e., taping procedures, slowing down and separating problematic sounds, efficient preparation of sounds), teachers will find that listening to tapes can be time consuming. There are some strategies which teachers can adopt to minimize their time commitment.

First, teachers must approach tapes in a disciplined way. Picking the same time of day to listen to tapes, carrying tapes and student folders, having paper for notes readily available near the recorder, and limiting oneself to 10-15 minutes all are effective ways to keep this task under control. If teachers

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are not organized, listening to tapes will become too time consuming and eventually cause tapes to be handed back late or, worse, lead to a sense of being overworked.

In the initial stages, students are practicing very few sentences, and teachers can listen to almost all of their tapes. However, when students are working on seven sentences or more, teachers may simply listen to the last day or even the last set of practice sentences. I find that in the early stages I talk much longer on the tapes, pasing along procedural information and explaining very carefully. In the later stages of the course, much of my taping is short and limited to a few suggestions. Both to save teacher time and to give students only as much feedback as they can use, I limit the number of corrections or suggestions to perhaps five or six.

Analysis and creating sentences may pose initial problems for teachers, but efficient time management will shorten the time spent outside of class.

Helping students. Effective strategies for helping students overcome their pronunciation difficulties are a very important part of the overall approach. Frequently, students have developed the attitude that they cannot pronounce certain sounds or combinations of sounds, and it is the job of the teacher to help change this attitude. The sooner the teacher can show the students that there are ways to overcome any problems, the students will begin to believe in the teacher, see progress, and work harder. Teachers, then, must be able to help the students find ways

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to pronounce difficult sound combinations and also to be able to produce them in the flow of speech. In addition to having students slow down and separate sounds when they practice, there are other specific strategies that can be used.

Initially, students need help in producing problematic sounds. For example, many oriental speakers have troubles with the /l/,/r/ distinction. In many cases, they cannot produce an /l/ clearly, even when they are concentrating on that one sound. A very simple way to help students produce the /l/ every time is to have them say,"la, la, la" a few times. They should do this before practicing any sentences which have /l/, /r/ problems in them. If a word has the /li/ sound, students can say,"la, la, la," and then "li, li, li" before they try to say the word.

Another strategy for helping students produce problematic sounds is to find common words which they can pronounce which have the problematic sound in them. Often, students will have difficulty with words like "turn","world", and "early" and it might appear that they cannot master the /er/ sound. In most cases, however, students will be able to pronounce the sound in another word, such as in "fire". Having the students pronounce "fire", letting them know that this is the sound, and having them repeat the /er/ sound and then use it in "early" often works. The important aspect of this strategy is that it shows students that they have the ability to pronounce many difficult sounds, and it also enables some students to search for their

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own solutions to problem sounds. Not the least significant is the confidence that students develop in their teachers and themselves when they learn how to pronounce words that they had all but given up on.

Perhaps one of the most familiar difficulties for many students is the "sheep/ship" distinction. Because most students have resigned themselves to mispronouncing "sheep" and "sheet", teachers can build considerable confidence and enthusiasm when they can help students pronounce these words clearly. Generally, the /i/, or long vowel, becomes /I/, or short, thus causing a phonemic change feequently resulting in embarrassment or confusion. If students practice the word by separating each phoneme, /sh/--/i/--/t/, insisting on precise pronunciation of the /i/, the word can be mastered. This problem is a vivid example of how the environment of a sound can affect it. All students can pronounce /i/ in isolation, but when this sound is combined with the /sh/ on one side and the /t/ on the other, there is a tendency for students to be unable to maintain the /i/. They find it difficult to move from the /sh/ to the /i/ and keep the /i/ long. Even they succeed in doing that, then in moving towards the /t/, the /i/ is again distorted, sounding more like /I/ than /i/. In working with students, the teacher may have to help students find the /i/ again by giving them key words (e.g., "he, me, see") and then returning to "sheet".

The importance of pronouncing "sheep" and "sheet" goes beyond the individual words. Students who have spent up to 15 years

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despairing of ever being able to pronounce the word find that in a few short weeks, they can say the word correctly. They not only gain confidence in themselves, but also in the teacher's ability to help them.

Another area of help lies in the teachers' giving students shortcuts which enable them to pronounce complicated sound sequences. At about the middle of the semester, showing students how to prepare for, but not release, final stops before going on to the next word is crucial to developing the students' ability to utter long sentences with proper breath control. For the many students who have never pronounced final stops (/t/,/p/, /k/) speaking becomes a very difficult process of breath control. When they concentrate on pronouncing final stops, they find themselves releasing air and then trying to recover in time to produce the following sound. Since native speakers seldom release final stops (we prepare the stop, but do not release it), our students must learn to do the same thing in order to feel comfortable in rapid speech.

A similar aid can be used for students who have troubles with /f/ or /v/. They have usually been told to put their top teeth on their bottom lip to make these sounds. With only a cursory investigation native speakers will see that they do not usually do this. They employ a subtle variation which makes the pronunciation of certain clusters, not just easier, but possible. In the sequence "keep five pennies", the native speaker prepares the /f/ in "five" while pronouncing the /p/ in "keep"

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by placing the top teeth on the lower lip, but slightly inside the mouth while. To try to say these two words by putting the top teeth in the middle of the lower lip makes it very difficult. Although a small adjustment, many fossilized students need to be told and shown how to do this. Of course, they will need practice in order to develop the feel for this movement and to form new habits, but once they see how easy it is, they are usually ready to put the time into practicing it.

Conclusion

Helping students who have spent years developing incorrect speech habits form new habits of pronunciation is a considerable task. Most of us do not know where to start because each student seems to have his or her idiosyncratic problems. We cannot simply drill all the students in sound production exercises; most of the students have spent years doing the same kinds of drills and they know that they are no better off. Usually, advanced courses are not designed to provide time for individualized instruction. Our task is further complicated by the fact that our professional literature can give us little help.

The approach, techniques and strategies presented here are a result of many years of working with advanced fossilized speakers. It is a very narrow approach, one which has been developed for implementation in courses where little class time is available for pronunciation. The focus of the approach is

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on consonant clusters, especially those unusual clusters which occur at word junctures--the ones that are seldom practiced in the initial stages.

Because this approach views fossilized pronunciation as a motor skill, a muscular coordination process, the techniques and strategies of music instruction have been extremely useful in helping students prepare for sound production and move from one difficult sound to the other. Certainly, other approaches to pronunciation instruction have been broader in scope, but it is just this breadth which makes the application to the typical classroom exceedingly difficult.

The approach presented here does not solve all problems: in fact, it is crucial to the success of the approach that goals be kept to a realistic minimum. There are, of course, some students who do not relate well to this type of instruction, one that requires active student participation and practice. There are also some students who make progress during the semester but who revert to old habits as soon as the semester is over. However, for those students who conscientiously apply themselves, this approach can make a considerable difference in the clarity of their speech. It makes them both aware of the problems in their pronuciation which are negatively affecting their communicability or their educational background, and it also gives them the strategies and the confidence that they need to overcome persistent and pervasive production errors.

For the teacher, this approach demands involvement and

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hard work, but it is the kind of work which produces immmediate feedback and rewards. One week a student cannot pronounce certain words, and the next week he or she can. The approach, even in the initial stages of implementation, yields results, motivating the teacher to continue to further develop skills in helping students. It provides us with a few of those little victories which make the profession of teaching such a rewarding one.

As the TESOL profession evolves, an increasing number of teachers will be confronted with an increasing number of students who have fossilized pronunciation. It behooves the profession to develop approaches which address this problem, approaches which enable us to help those students.

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